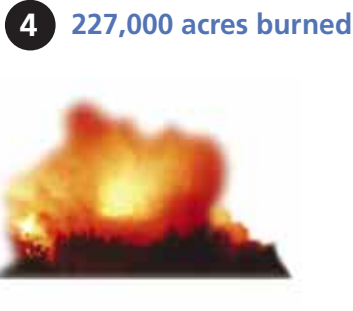
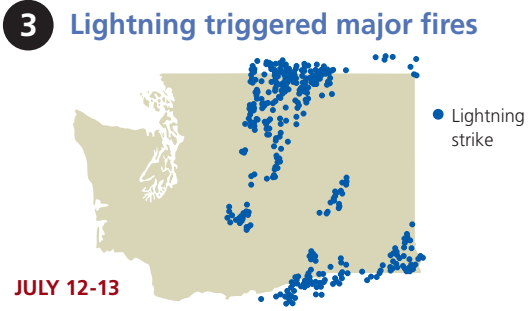
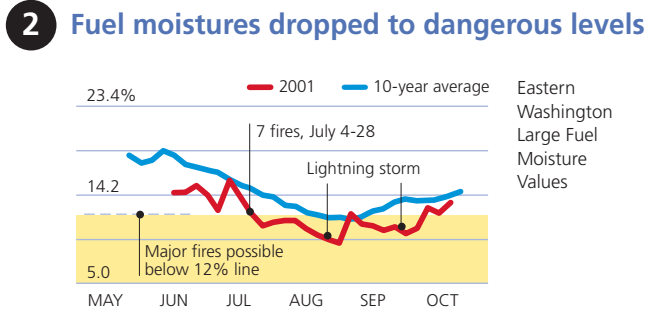
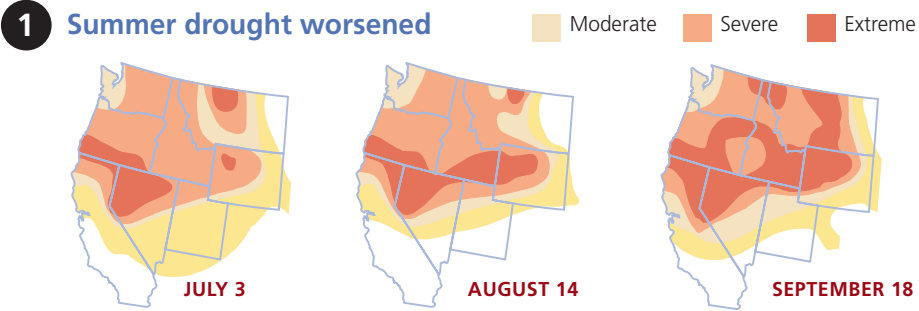


A Dry Season, Dry Lightning, A Challenging Fire Season For 2001

Two years of summer drought and poor winter recovery, evidenced by record low snow packs, created crackling dry woods. With dry lightning and wind, this proved a fiery combination for 2001. By early July, the percentage of water measured in Eastern Washington’s forest fuels was hovering at the critical 12 percent “fuel moisture” level. That’s when Washington’s fuels began burning. On July 12-13, on Aug. 13, and again on Sept. 17, dry lightning lit up Washington’s skies — and its forests. When it was all over, wildfires had blackened more than 227,000 acres during an extreme fire season which lasted nearly four weeks longer than most.



Data Sources:
Western States Drought Map:
NOAA, CPC, JAWF, NCDC.
Large Fuel Moisture Values:
Greg Sinnott / DNR.
Lightning Strikes Map:
Weather Bank Inc.

A Tough Year, Some Important Successes



DURING THE 2001 FIRE SEASON, we at DNR faced some of the most difficult conditions we have seen in Washington since 1994. More than 227,000 acres of wildlands burned in response to drought, wind, and dry lightning in the Columbia Gorge and across eastern Washington. On three occasions, all five of the state’s Interagency Incident Management Teams were in the field simultaneously.

For July, August, and September, DNR paid out more than \$34 million in fire suppression costs — DNR’s share of \$108 million

Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland (center) talks with fire managers Bruce Holloway (left) and Dick Dunton (right) at the Libby South Fire.

expended in total within Washington to contain nearly 1,300 wildfires on private, state and federal land.

Despite the magnitude of this fire season, DNR and our partners continued to make significant progress in fire protection.

- Fire prevention teams and fuel specialists held Firewise workshops and created defensible space buffers around homes and towns like Roslyn as a way to limit the number of structures involved in the fires we fight.
- Prevention publicity about burn bans and fire danger helped limit the number of human-caused fires to below average.
- DNR’s partnership as part of the interagency agreement with local and federal firefighting agencies improved our coordination, response time and resulted in significant cost-savings.

We are also working closely with local and federal wildland firefighting agencies to re-examine and doublecheck our safety in the wake of the tragedy at the Thirtymile fire. That event touched all of us, and as a former smokejumper I am committed to the highest level of safety for our fire crews.

In the future, we will continue to make progress fighting, controlling and preventing wildland fire.

- We will continue to refine interagency processes to ensure that fires on public and private lands are attacked aggressively.
- We are building on National Fire Plan, Firewise, and prevention successes to further reduce the number of homes, communities, and forests threatened by wildland fire.
- DNR is beginning to address significant forest health problems which contribute to dry forests and the rapid spread of fire in bug-killed and overstocked forests.

During the 2001 fire season, we faced difficult challenges in protecting the 12 million acres of private and state forest land. However, thanks to our cooperation with local and federal services and the commitment of the Legislature, DNR will continue to prevent and effectively fight wildland fires across Washington.

Doug Sutherland

Coordination is key to aggressive firefighting

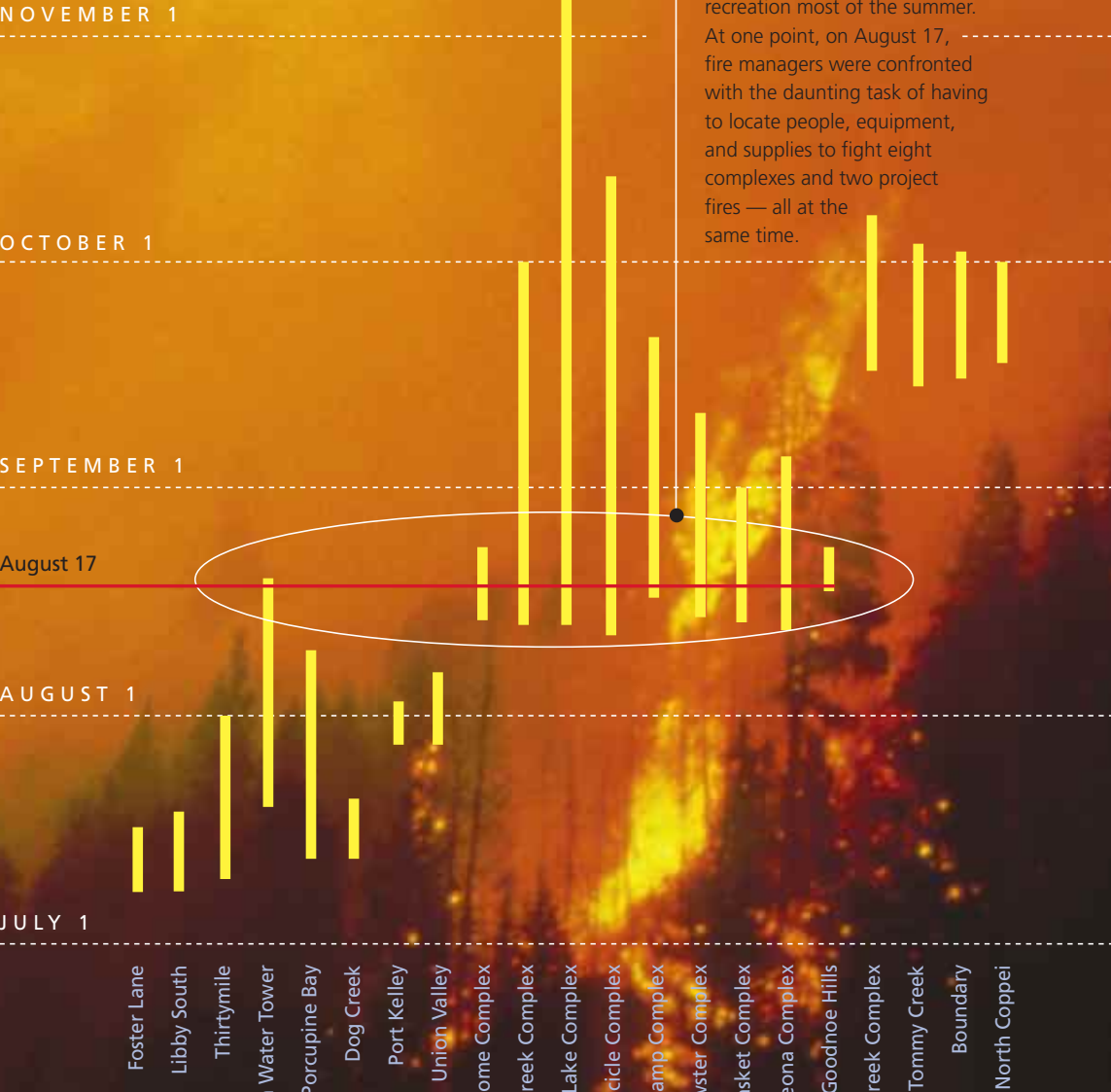
Most of the 1,106 wildfires or the 1,388 false alarm calls DNR responded to this year did not make front page headlines. Also invisible most of the time were the few dozen people who dispatched 20,250 engines, bulldozers, airplanes, helicopters, tree fellers, crews of firefighters, and thousands of other items necessary to extinguish deadly fires.

Many of these resources were directed to Washington’s 21 headline-making fires; the rest went to more than 1,000 local and regional fires.

Fighting fires has become more efficient two years into this state’s innovative effort to unify its federal, state, and local resources.

* Project Fires are defined as: Local wildfires that can only be contained by bringing in suppression resources from all across the state — not just the local DNR region.

2001 Project Fires* Timeline



DNR depends on local contractors and correction crews to help get the job done.



2001 Wildland Fire Summary



Brenda Theel,
DNR Crew Supervisor
at Cedar Creek
Correction Camp,
supervised inmates
(above) fighting fires in
Eastern Washington.

Inmates ready when other crews are busy

Washington's 840 correctional camp inmates provide high-value, low-cost labor to state taxpayers. The use of both juvenile and adult crews is cost-effective and provides a ready source of trained workers. Inmates contributed 6,149 crew days this fire season: 54 crews of 10 inmates each dug fire-break trails while five inmate field kitchens kept firefighters well nourished. An additional 25 contingency inmate hand crews were also trained and put to work. Last year, while private crews were busy fighting the Montana fires, DNR counted on its inmate crews to fill the gap.

DNR contracts with private vendors

During the 2001 fire season, private vendors played a vital role in state firefighting efforts. For actual fire suppression, and to operate incident base camps, DNR contracted for firefighters, support staff, engines, aircraft, helicopters, bulldozers, water tenders, kitchens, showers — as well as groceries and meals prepared by local restaurants or residents living in the area. When it comes to fighting fire, DNR depends on local and regional contractors to help get the job done — on time and efficiently.



Fire Prevention

In addition to this year's \$2.5 million National Fire Plan grant activities, DNR also sponsored its annual "Nature Greet Technology" fire prevention web design contest for middle and high school students, participated in regional and national prevention teams assigned to Washington, and conducted its regular Smokey Bear and other educational programs at community events.

Protecting communities from fire

Surrounded on all sides by rolling forest, residents of the historic town of Roslyn east of the Cascades now have a 200-foot fuel break between them and approaching wildfires. Residents of nearby Ronald and Cle Elum are counting their blessings as well — and for the same reasons, because they had buffers built.

All three communities were recipients this summer of an unprecedented \$340,000 prevention project managed by DNR and local fire districts, and funded by the US Forest Service. Around an additional 30 homes, crews also pruned trees, cleaned roofs, and removed decades worth of other flammable fuels that feed wildfires during dry years.

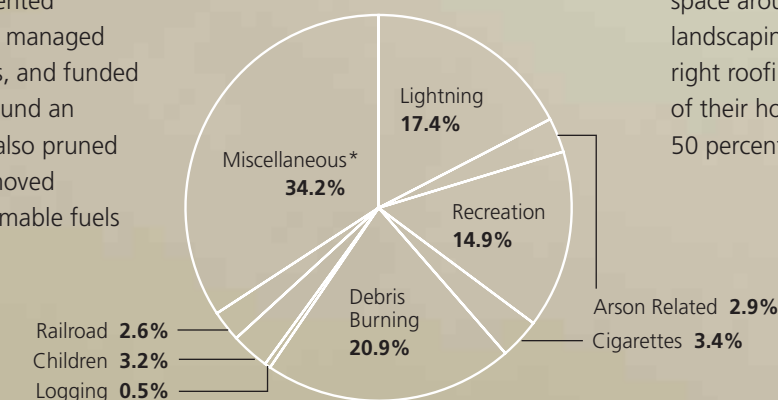
Firewise sessions teach prevention

More than 160 community leaders this spring participated in five free regional workshops organized by DNR as part of the national Firewise prevention program. Workshops were held in Spokane, Port Townsend, Wenatchee, Vancouver, and Stevenson for homeowners, builders, insurance underwriters, local planners, and other professionals involved in wildfire risk reduction. See: www.firewise.org/

DNR receives \$2.5 million grant

Thousands of residents living in Washington's highest fire-risk areas this summer received free fire prevention assistance, thanks to a \$2.5 million National Fire Plan grant to DNR. The grant allocated \$400,000 for southwest Washington, \$1.45 million for northeast Washington, and \$650,000 for southeast Washington.

Homeowners who clear a defensible space around their homes, take the right landscaping precautions, and have the right roofing increase the chances of their home surviving a wildfire by 50 percent.



2001 GENERAL FIRE CAUSES ON LANDS PROTECTED BY DNR

*** Miscellaneous:**
Fireworks, electric fences and power lines, machinery sparks, equipment crashes, burning cars and buildings, wood cutting.

For more information and alternate formats, call (360) 902-1300 or TTY (360) 902-1125. Visit DNR's website at <http://www.wa.gov/dnr>

DNR COMMUNICATIONS 12/01 COVER PHOTO: RANDY WARNOCK (DNR) BACK COVER PHOTOS: MATT FEELEIN (DNR) ALL OTHER PHOTOS: RANDY WARNOCK AND DNR PHOTO FILES GRAPHIC DESIGN: LUIS PRADO (DNR)

